

MASONRY IN MANITOBA

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OPERATIVE TO SPECULATIVE

The transition from Operative Freemasonry to Speculative Freemasonry is a subject that has intrigued all who have given any study to our historical background. To adequately describe the change from an operative art to a speculative science would require many years of research, and then without definite conclusions on all points. The mystery of our origin is likely never to be solved satisfactorily, and it may be well that it is so. The mystery of our origin makes Freemasonry intriguing and possibly more interesting than it otherwise might be.

Regardless of what our earlier history may have been, Masonic students and writers seem to agree that the transition from operative to speculative did not gain momentum until after the days of the early glory of the Cathedral Builders and Guilds of the British Isles.

One thing of which we are certain is that there was a considerable number of Operatives when the premier Grand Lodge of England was formed. In fact, it seems that some of the members of the four old Lodges who formed themselves into a Grand Lodge were at the time engaged under Sir Christopher Wren, whose name is pre-eminently connected with the erection of a great number of the most beautiful of the old cathedrals.

There was a golden age of cathedral building, with no lack of Freemasons for the Lodges formed at the cathedral sites, where such Lodges remained in existence so long as building continued, always for a considerable period, often a half century or more. These Freemasons were, so this writer gathers from his reading of the history of the period, free of the guilds, as well as, in many instances, free of certain local laws and free of certain local taxes. These facts partially indicate the origin of the term "Free." From necessity there came a decline in cathedral building, consequently the number of Operative Freemasons declined until there was danger of many of the Lodges, and of Freemasonry as a whole, becoming extinct. There seems to be authentic data that previous to this time a few notable and distinguished persons, never in any way connected with Operative Freemasonry, had been accepted as Speculative Freemasons, thus giving the terms "Accepted" and "Speculative" that we know today. When the numbers in the Lodges began to decline, the Brethren merely followed an example already set and accepted Speculatives in numbers, instead of only a few. Such persons were "accepted" because of what it was believed they could do for Freemasonry, politically and otherwise, as well as to give prestige and augment numbers.

The number of Operatives continued to decline, and the number of accepted Speculatives had been going on for a century or more before 1717, when the premier Grand Lodge was formed, at which time the Accepteds or Speculatives unquestionably greatly outnumbered the Free or Operatives.

Despite the increase in Speculatives, the first Grand Master, Anthony Sayer, as well as one of the Grand Wardens, were Operatives. Operatives held one or more of these offices until 1723, when Accepteds or Speculatives were named to all these offices and have held all of them ever since. From that time, cathedral building having almost completely ceased, the number of Operative members declined so rapidly that the Old Charges of the Operatives were discarded and Anderson's Constitutions substituted, although even today the Old Charges have considerable weight.

By not later than 1730, it is easy to believe, no Operatives remained, but our Ancient Operative Brethren, regardless of their origin, bequeathed to us a fraternal edifice that has withstood the ravages of the years, one which detractors have assailed in vain. The old Operatives builded better than they knew, possibly better than Speculatives are building today.—*Oregon Mason*.

ANNUAL COMMUNICATION

A brief summary of the programme being arranged for this important event has already been published. It is suggested that the brethren obtain from their local lodge secretary the details as to time, place and dates of the several special features of our seventy-fifth anniversary.

We want to impress upon the membership at large, especially those who are members of Grand Lodge, the significance of this important occasion.

If you are a Past Master, a Master of your Lodge, or the Senior or Junior Warden, then you are entitled to attend the Annual Communication where you have a place and entitled to vote and take part in all the deliberations.

Having been honored by your Lodge in your election to office there are duties and responsibilities which cannot be regarded lightly. One of these responsibilities is to represent your Lodge at the Annual Communication which will be held on June 7th and 8th.

We realize that only a few Lodges in the rural districts make it possible for any of the three principal officers to come to Winnipeg for Grand Lodge. The writer has always held that the expense for this official visit ought to be borne by the Lodge because not all the officers of our Lodges can bear the cost personally. Whether they can or cannot, the Lodge ought to provide the means whereby the qualifying officers are enabled to be present.

This is a special occasion and one which under ordinary circumstances will be of great value to the life of your Lodge. If you see to it that your Master and Wardens are here then the incentive they will derive from association with others from all parts of the jurisdiction will find reflection in the added enthusiasm they will bring to the home Lodge on their return.

We urge the members of every Lodge in Manitoba to centre their interest in our forthcoming anniversary. Think over the brief suggestions contained in this item and see to it that some brother is definitely committed to come to Winnipeg during the first week in June.

Masonry does not advertise itself to the general public. Our business is kept to ourselves. However, if, during our week of anniversary there are hundreds of brother Masons in the city it will indicate the strength and interest of the Craft in this Province.

Your Grand Master will be the happiest man in Winnipeg if he finds the place of meeting crowded to overflowing but this desirable objective cannot be attained unless the members generally plan their work to permit attendance at the Annual Communication.

If you have never attended Grand Lodge previously you will find the experience one that will be long remembered.

AN ALLEGORY

Here is a story I heard recently. Once upon a time a man went out for a walk. He had no raincoat or umbrella with him, and when suddenly overtaken by a rainstorm he began to look around for shelter. This he found in a hollow tree. Making himself comfortable there, he fell asleep.

Some time afterwards he awoke to find that the storm had passed. To his horror, however, he also discovered that the aperture in which he had sheltered had become swollen with the rain and, try as he might, he could not squeeze himself out into the open. His plight was serious, for there was nobody within hailing distance and moreover it was a lonely place. He might be there for weeks without anyone chancing to pass that way.

And so, in the best tradition of those about to die, he began to review his life. He had been a good husband and father; a faithful member of his trade union; a good and loyal Mason, and had taken some interest in his neighbours. Yes, he had attended church along with his family on Sundays.

Then he bethought him of what obligations he had taken when he was initiated into Freemasonry. His self examination was critical. It occurred to him that perhaps he had been somewhat dilatory and lacking. When he remembered how he had excused himself from doing some of the things he should have done as a Mason he felt so small that he was able to get up and walk out of the tree trunk without any difficulty.

Is it not tragic that today it should be such an effort merely to

maintain what has been handed down to us. There have been builders engaged on the superstructure for three-quarters of a century but we must add to the edifice if we are to justify our claim to be Master Masons.

HAVE WE?

The tenets of Masonry: Faith, Hope and Charity, are the very essence upon which human life depends. The prime object of Masonry is to develop these moral elements in man to the highest degree, thus infusing the greatest quantum of the life-sustaining moral elements into the make-up of man and enabling him to realize that by the exercise of these moral virtues: Faith, Hope and Charity, he is not only maintaining the elements essential to his own life and happiness, but is helping to advance mankind to happiness and peace. These, in short, are some of the objectives of Masonry.

Have we Masons lived in accordance with these, the greatest, the most practical and beneficent teachings ever given to man? Are we helping carry into effect these noble tenets? Are we giving enough of our time and means toward the accomplishment of these objectives? Are we giving support to those who are actively engaged in the work of Masonry? Have we endeavoured to deserve the honor that Masonry bestows on us? Have we striven to reflect credit on our Order by our presence on every occasion possible? Have we done the things that Masonry obligates us to do? Have we refrained from doing the things Masonry enjoins us not to do?

What answers could we give if we were questioned by an accusing angel before an impartial and just tribunal?

The life and death struggles between truth and error, justice and avarice, liberty and oppression, good and evil, which have been going on throughout the ages, and particularly the struggle between morality and materialism of our own time make it plain that if we believe in the ideals of Masonry and desire to bequeath them to posterity, we Masons cannot long remain in this state of indifference.

Two roads stretch before us, the road of death and the road of life. If we choose death, then let us disregard the admonitions of our Masters, let us continue in our apathy and inactivity and await the obliteration of the Masonic influence. It cannot survive the emptiness of its own votaries. If, however, we choose life, then it behooves us to consecrate our noblest powers, material and spiritual, to the one purpose of regenerating in our brethren the principles of Freemasonry.

The Masonic Spirit is the moral force we need today. Strengthen the Masonic spirit. Let the principles of liberty and brotherhood which have made the growth and form of our Craft, be an

outward reality. Let the members resume their labors in the interest of freedom and peace. Let the Masonic Lodge be again the organic center of practical and upright men. Let the Temple again be dedicated to the great purpose of uniting all civilized men into one brotherhood.

Let the Masonic altars be re-kindled, upon which men shall sacrifice not their blood but their passions, not their lives but their prejudices, which maim and kill their fellowmen. Let that come to pass and the living warmth of the Masonic hope will spread to the weak extremities of our Order which are derelict in their duties, and behind in their dues, and our nation will gain in moral strength as Masonry regains its estranged votaries.

Let the spirit of achievement move in the leaders of our Order, and the work will be resumed. Let the work of Masonry disclose itself in a great national deed of eradicating in this free land the dank weeds of prejudice and intolerance. Let us will our own better future of the world, not by a diminished patriotism and love for our own country, but by claiming the full heritage of our nation, uniting our people with the bonds of friendship and mutual sympathy, seeking to improve the life of every citizen and to safeguard our nation against the assaults of the renegade within our borders.

When Masonry is victorious, superstition and bigotry will no longer enslave the human mind. Tyranny will be dethroned, government will be clean, the home will be pure, industry will be honest, and the Temple will be a house of God for all people. Man, unfettered in hand and mind, will stand erect in the sunshine of freedom and in peace.

(Texas Grand Lodge Magazine.)

FOR TRUTH AND FREEDOM

Some day when the cloud of prejudice has been dispelled by the searchlight of Truth, the world will honor Masonry for its heroic service to the freedom of thought and freedom of faith. No part of its ministry has been more noble, no principle of its teaching has been more precious than its age-long and unwavering demand for the right and duty of every soul to seek that light by which no man was ever injured, and that Truth which makes him free.

Down through the ages—often when human conscience was dragged as a slave at the wheel of the ecclesiastical chariot—always and everywhere, Masonry has stood for the right of the soul to know the Truth, and to look up unbidden from the lap of the earth into the face of Him in whose great hand it stands.

Not freedom from faith, but freedom of faith, has been its watchword, on the ground that as despotism is the mother of anarchy, so bigoted dogmatism is the prolific source of skepticism.

(Joseph Fort Newton.)

FROM OUR MAIL BAG

We note with pleasure that the Grand Lodge of Quebec has commenced a "Bulletin," similar in format to our publication.

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A Past Master of Robbie Burns Lodge No. 100 now residing in Vancouver sent a contribution towards the expense of issuing this monthly periodical. He adds "I really cannot find words to tell you just how much I have enjoyed and benefitted from perusing its pages. I feel certain that all members throughout Manitoba will receive a deal of encouragement and safe guidance through reading and thoroughly digesting its contents. How I wish such a magazine was in existence when I was a young member, especially during my occupation in the Master's Chair."

* * *

It is interesting to receive letters from any brother residing in the jurisdiction but it is a double pleasure to get news of a Manitoba Lodge member carrying his load in another part of the country. In this category is the following extract from a letter received in the Grand Secretary's office a few days ago. The writer is Brother H. J. Humphrey, a Life Member of Treherne Lodge No. 51. He says:

"I was initiated in Treherne Lodge No. 51, in August 1907. Left Treherne in September 1909 for South Qu'Appelle, Sask., where I attended all the meetings held during my stay there. Left, later, for Kinistino, Sask., and two days after my arrival attended a meeting to consider the advisability of starting a Lodge. During the winter of 1910 several meetings were held with the result that the Lodge was instituted on 29th April 1910.

"In December 1928 I missed two meetings on account of a severe illness, (understand when meetings are missed on account of sickness they are not counted as missed meetings). Except for these two meetings I have never missed a meeting from August 1907 (date of his initiation) until the present time. That is or will be 43 years in August 1950.

"I was elected Secretary of Carrot River Lodge, Kinistino, Sask., in April 1916, have been continuously and still hold that office, a period of 34 years. Would like to be at your 75th Anniversary but am afraid that will not be possible."

He added a second memo in his envelope enclosing a contribution towards the Harry Woods Memorial Window, as a token of friendship to "Brother Woods who was a very good friend to me."